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*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 08VATICAN42, WHA A/S SHANNON DISCUSSES CUBA, PARAGUAY, BOLIVIA, AND

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08VATICAN42**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08VATICAN42</a>	<a href="#">2008-06-06 15:27</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Vatican</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>  
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>  
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2757244.aspx>  
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>  
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000042

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SUBJECT: WHA A/S SHANNON DISCUSSES CUBA, PARAGUAY, BOLIVIA, AND  
D'ESCOTO WITH HOLY SEE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 00500

VATICAN 00000042 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Rafael P. Foley, ADCM, Embassy Vatican.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Holy See wants a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba and will continue to raise the issue of political prisoners with Havana, but believes that change will be slow. For the Holy See, social justice and addressing inequality are key to the success of democracy in the hemisphere. The Holy See supports the positive role that the Church can play in addressing social and political tensions, such as in Bolivia, but notes that having clerics assume political positions -- such as in Paraguay and Nicaragua -- is against canon law and Church teachings. Nevertheless, the Holy See will try to avoid controversies regarding President Lugo's election, and over Father d'Escoto's nomination to preside over the UN General Assembly.

[1](#)2. (C) WHA Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon met with Holy See deputy foreign minister, Monsignor Pietro Parolin, on May 4. A/S Shannon was in Rome to participate in an Embassy Vatican conference on Catholic social thinking and Latin American influences in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (septel).

Cuba

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[1](#)3. (C) Parolin said that the Holy See continues to monitor the situation in Cuba. While some say that Raul Castro will only introduce cosmetic changes, the Holy See is "a bit more optimistic" that there may be more substantial changes, even if at a very slow pace. Parolin agreed that there seems to be no desire on the part of the regime for structural changes, and that for this reason some reforms may be aimed at protecting rather than transforming the system. Cuban government officials are not willing to speak about a transition. At the same time, he added, many Cubans are more preoccupied with access to basic necessities than about immediate political change.

[1](#)4. (C) Parolin reaffirmed that the Holy See wishes Cubans to enjoy peace and democracy. A political change in Cuba must come from Cuba itself, not the outside, and in this regard he agreed that the regime should engage in dialogue with dissidents. While the Holy See does not align itself with any particular political group, it believes that peaceful initiatives for change -- such as the Varela project -- are positive. Parolin confirmed that Cardinal Bertone had raised the issue of political prisoners with the Cuban government during his February 20-26 visit to the island. A/S Shannon underscored the importance of the Holy See urging the release of the political prisoners at every opportunity.

Bolivia

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¶5. (C) Parolin welcomes what he sees as a change of attitude of President Evo Morales with respect to the Catholic Church in Bolivia, and how Church officials there are playing a positive role in addressing social and political tensions. Morales had initially pushed aside relations with the Church, and engaged in a very confrontational path to implement his economic reforms. Parolin added that, while the goal of addressing the needs of indigenous populations and correcting deep socioeconomic inequalities is a legitimate and commendable aspiration, Morales' means had been ineffective, something he may now realize.

¶6. (C) Parolin was pleased that La Paz had named a new Ambassador to the Holy See who is both close to Morales and "a good Catholic" who was educated in Catholic institutions. Parolin said that President Morales had requested a meeting with the Pope, adding that such a meeting may not be imminent because the Pope already has many such requests from other heads of State.

The social role of the Church

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¶7. (C) Parolin welcomed and strongly agreed with A/S Shannon's comments on social justice as crucial to democracy in the region. Parolin lamented that a continent with such a great number of Christians, mostly Catholics, is also the one where inequality between the rich and the poor is greatest. The Church, he added, has a role to play in this regard, but at the social and moral level: it is up to lay Catholics, not the clergy, to take the commitment to social justice to the political arena.

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¶8. (C) Parolin lamented that Bishop Lugo had decided to contravene canon law and Church teachings by running for office in Paraguay. The election of Lugo represents a challenge for the Holy See, which is sympathetic to his discourse on human dignity -- and grateful for his conciliatory statements of love for the Church -- but disappointed by his decision and concerned that others may emulate him.

¶9. (C) Parolin said that the Holy See does not wish to create a controversy over Lugo's election. He speculated that the appropriate Holy See dicastery (the Congregation for Bishops) might agree to Lugo's request for a more permanent dispensation from his clerical status, a request that had been previously denied. (Note: Bishop Lugo is currently suspended "a divinis", a serious sanction that forbids him from carrying on his episcopal responsibilities and which is generally a punishment for clergy who have acted in a way inconsistent with their religious vocation. End note.)

¶10. (C) Parolin asked A/S Shannon for our views on Nicaragua's Father D'Escoto becoming President of the UN General Assembly (reftel), and confided that "we, too (are horrified)" by it. He added that the Holy See would keep a low profile on the matter, and thought that the USG approach to the issue was wise (note: D'Escoto is suspended "a divinis" and thus forbidden from exercising regular priestly duties, but he is still a priest. End note.)

Comment

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¶11. (C) Parolin was genuinely pleased with A/S Shannon's exposition of the linkage between democracy and social justice.

A/S Shannon's message was equally well received, later in the day, by Latin American Ambassadors and the 120-plus audience at the Embassy-sponsored conference on human rights (septel).

¶12. (C) For some Holy See officials and Catholic NGO and lay movements in Rome and beyond, USG interests for the region are self-serving (in areas such as drug reduction or security), driven by domestic lobbyists (in the case of Cuba), or insensitive to the plight of the most vulnerable (in urging structural reforms or rapid trade liberalization). A/S Shannon's message that we share a concern for equality and social justice in Latin America, and welcome the participation of broad segments of historically underprivileged sectors of Latin American societies in their respective countries' political systems, challenges this bias and helps to refocus the attention and responsibility for Latin America's future on their political leaders.  
GLENDON